

The Marshland Ghost

Or, Our Advertisement for a Haunted House And What Came of It.

The Supernatural Investigation Society—that was what we styled ourselves—was limited to six members: namely, Messieurs Toombs, Graves, Knight, Gasheigh, Sully, and Bone. For a twelvemonth or more we had been adding our brains by collating ghost-stories out of books, or collecting them from our friends. But this was, at best, second-hand evidence.

"What was it?" said Jack Toombs, our president, bringing his fist upon the table with a crash, and starting us all for twelve months of continual spectral literature tends to unstraining the nerves—"what we want is to see a ghost!"

"That," observed Mr. Gasheigh, "is easier said than done. Gentle men," he continued, solemnly, "al though there is not a road of ground in this mighty city upon which some deed of blood and darkness has not been perpetrated. I don't believe there's a ghost to be heard of in all London. Either the noise of the night-cabs, or the carbonated atmosphere, or the policemen's bull-eyes, or the cats on the roof—whatever it is, something keeps 'em away. For aught we know, a frightful and mysterious murder may have been committed under this very roof—nay, on that exact spot where you, Sully, are now standing."

(Mr. Sully looked uncomfortable, and shifted the position of his chair.)

"Why don't we hear of that murderer?" pursued Mr. Gasheigh. "Because sir," said the honorable member, fixing his eyes on the president, "in this bustling exciting metropolis, it was probably only five days' wonder. In a secluded country place it could have afforded gossip for a century. Now this is the gist of my argument. Ghosts don't care to walk except where there's a public who know all about their affairs. Here in London, if you meet a ghost on the stairs, you would take him for a house breaker, and insist on giving him in charge; whereas, in the country, your blood would curdle with horror at a similar visitation, because you would recognize the spectre of old Job Tattler, the miser, who was found in the horsepond one November morning, but whose hoarded wealth was never discovered."

"Why not advertise," said Bone, "for a Haunted House?"

The proposal was received with acclamation, an advertisement was composed and inserted in the public prints, all answers to be addressed to me, A. Wynter Knight, Esq., secretary to the Society.

We received several written replies, which I may dismiss very briefly. Two or three of them were palpable hoaxes, while one was from the landlord of a boarding-house, who alleged that he had lost all his lodgers owing to supernatural noises. This gentleman wanted us to take a lease of this house of his hands, and we had nearly concluded the bargain when Graves, our vice-president, met one of the late boarders in society, who informed him that he and the other inmates had quitted the house not because of ghosts, but because a frightful and mysterious stench pervaded the lower part of the premises which no disinfecting fluid could cure. In short the landlord was a humbug, as I periphrastically told him during our last interview.

Then there was an old lady, widow of a master mariner, resident in Three Colt Lane, Victoria Park, N.E., who wrote thus:

Sir—I have a drawing-room floor to let, furnished, with use of kitchen, if not cooking too late dinners. The house is haunted, but that I have ever seen anything myself; but my son, who is a mate of a collier-brig, coming home late from Commercial Docks, stumbled over a Newfoundland dog on the first-floor landing, which ran down stairs, and though he followed it was no longer visible. Now, sir, a party lived in the drawing-room set with three himself into Sir George Duckett's Canal, through sporting and betting. I never heard he kept a dog, but why not, on the sly? His employers being aware that paunches are expensive, and naturally suspicious, as his salary was only eighty pounds a year. I can give you reasonable attendance; and remain, sir, your humble servant.

MARY CLACK.

We could not accept this worthy Dame's proposal. There was a vein of honesty running through pleased us; but a haunted first-floor, with an obnoxious stench, and smoking ovens on the basement story, in the intervals of spectral visitations, was too absurd. More than a week passed away, and we despaired of getting anything to suit us, when one day, as I was seated in my office (I may mention that, when not supernaturally engaged, I am in the hemp, jute, and gunnybag business)—one day, as I was sitting in my office alone, a gentleman entered and introduced himself by laying a card on my desk. It was a large, old-fashioned, thick card, and bore the name of Mr. Edgar Batesford, beneath which was written in yellow-rusted ink, "Marshland Grange, Essex."

"You advertised for a haunted house?" he said, smiling.

I started; for at that moment my thoughts were immersed in fibrous commotions.

"Yes, sir, I did. Have you anything ghastly to offer us?"

"Possibly I have, on certain conditions."

"Will you name them?"

"That you visit the house in question alone in my company, without informing your brother-clubmen of your intention until the following day."

I regarded my visitor earnestly, to see if he looked like a rogue. His appearance was in his favor. He was a tall, thin young man, with good features and (what is noticeable in these days) a clean-shaven face. His clothes were new and fashionably out; but I observed that he wore an old-fashioned stand-up collar and stock.

"Where is the haunted house?" I asked.

"This is the place," he answered, pointing to the card—Marshland Grange, my own property. Owing to all sorts of absurd sinister rumors I haven't been able to let it for years. I shall therefore be delighted to have the mystery cleared up by your Society."

"What are your terms?"

"My terms! My dear sir, I shall only be too happy to pay you if you can prove the house un haunted. Should it, on the contrary, appear to be supernaturally infested, a few guineas to repay my expenses will amply suffice—say ten guineas; you can put the amount in your pocket."

My features must have betrayed some hesitation, for Mr. Batesford continued:

"You don't mind my suggestion, and very naturally too. You say to your self: 'I know nothing of this man. What is to prevent his inveigling me into some lonely ruinous place, and then extorting the ten guineas by violence?' Now, I know your respectability. Your firm, A. W. Knight and Co., was established in 1803, if I mistake not, just before Boney became Emperor."

"It was; and it strikes me I have seen the name of Batesford in our old ledgers."

"Very possibly; but never mind that at present. Now, I am going to give you a guarantee of my respectability. Here is a twenty-pound Bank of England note. Look that up in your safe until to-morrow, and meet me this evening at the Shoreditch Station for the 6.40 train. We will go together and sit up till twelve at Marshland Grange. Do you agree?"

"I do," I replied, as I turned my Chubbkey on his deposit. "There's my hand upon it."

Mr. Batesford did not appear to notice my proffered palm, but bowing slightly quitted the office.

"This is a queer customer," I thought. "As I have an hour to spare, I will follow the fellow, and see what becomes of him."

I put on my hat, and went out into Thames street; but though I traced his tall figure for some time, outtopping the ordinary run of wayfarers, I lost sight of him under the arch of London Bridge.

"Never mind," said I. "I shall see if he is true to his appointment this evening."

I must confess I felt rather nervous as my cab rattled up Bishopsgate street towards the station. But the ferocious hood and glory in store for me buoyed me up. Perhaps while my brother inquirers have only been talking about ghosts, I may be privileged to see one. Still I experienced some secret qualms, and I should have breathed more freely if Mr. Batesford had not been waiting me in front of the booking-office.

He nodded slightly, and said:

"Netherwood is our station. I presume, Mr. Knight, you will pay the fares? I am not above travelling second class."

I took the tickets accordingly, and entered a carriage that was pretty full of people; for I felt rather shy of my companion.

To beguile the tedium of the journey, I tried to engage him in conversation, but with little success. He appeared to be totally uninterested in politics, and in reply to my remarks on our financial prospects, said:

"I have been in Billy Pitt, sir. Look at his Sinking Fund. There's a masterpiece!"

Now, if the man who uttered those words had been eighty years old, I should have regarded him with interest as a harmless old fossil of the past; but here was a young man of five-and-twenty, who invariably spoke of guineas instead of pounds, called the French Emperor Bonaparte, and mentioned Pitt, as if the financier were still living. I could make no thing of him; so I drew out the "Evening Standard," and plunged into Manhattan's last letter.

Presently I heard the rustling of paper opposite, and peeping over my own broadsheet, observed that Mr. Batesford was also engaged with a newspaper. I felt anxious to know what journal he patronized, and was surprised to see the name of a well-known daily paper which had recently become extinct. The diminutive size of the sheet also astonished me, it appeared to have struck to half its

normal bulk. I peeped again; and being an adept at the old schoolboy accomplishment of reading upside down, managed to spell out the date—19th October, 1863.

"To-day a paper I thought; and yet, certainly, that journal has ceased to exist for months past."

My curiosity was on tiptoe. I doctored to have an explanation.

"Mr. Batesford, would you oblige me by exchanging papers?"

"Thank you," he replied, blandly; "I shall take no interest in yours, and I do not care to part with my own. However, you may just look at it."

He razored the sheet, so as to hold the title before my eyes. I had made a slight mistake in my topsyturvy decipherings. I had added a flourish to a figure where no such flourish existed: for Mr. Batesford's paper was the Morning Chronicle of the 19th October, 1803!

"Sixty years ago, this very day! I should like to read that paper. It must be quite a curiosity."

"Wait till we get home," said Mr. Batesford, smiling, and folding up the newspaper. "Omo, here we are at Netherwood. There is your carpet bag. We will walk across to the Grange, as it is dry under foot."

Mr. Batesford was probably an Essex man, and connected by Darwinian affiliation with the frogs of his native swamps; for in my opinion it was damp, gross, oozy and slushy as a walk as ever I took on a murky, lowering October night. We traversed lanes where the water dripped down our backs from the overhanging hedgerows; we got over styles which led into clayey footpaths by the side of slow moving streams; we entered, at last, upon a region of bulrushes, where the chilly water actually gurgled up about my ankles. I undaunted to keep up a stout heart. I said:

"A. W. Knight, remember that you are a Sarsaparil after Truth; remember, also, that there are a pair of dry shoes and socks in your carpet-bag."

At length after three miles of this glutinous journeying, we came out upon a firm high-road. I blessed the memory of Macadam, and strode merrily onwards. Presently we halted in front of a small garden.

"Marshland Grange," observed my companion, breaking a long continued silence.

I looked up at the house with a sigh of disappointment; it was such an utterly commonplace dwelling. I had pictured Marshland Grange as a rambling old edifice, exhibiting its wings, gables and additions, specimens of half-a-dozen architectural eras, and situated far from other humble abodes in a desolate swamp. In place of this, I beheld a common ten-roomed brown brick box, built evidently about the end of the last century, when picturequequeness was deemed barbarism, and within hail of half-a-dozen laborers' cottages.

"This is a haunted house?" I asked, half contemptuously, as Mr. Batesford led the way into the parlour.

"So the neighbors say," replied my companion.

"For some seconds I was unable to tell who he was such a long time striking a light. I then saw that he used a flint, steel and tinder-box."

"You are singularly old-fashioned," I remarked. "To be consistent, you should have travelled down from London in the old Essex Highflyer, Mr. Batesford."

"The railway was more convenient this evening," he answered quietly; as much as to say, "On other evenings I should prefer the Highflyer."

As soon as he lighted the candle (which, by the way, was a common, guttering, snuff-accumulating dip) I looked round the room. It was desolate enough; several windows were broken, while the furniture consisted of a couple of rickety chairs and a dilapidated deal table.

"Change your boots, Mr. Knight, and then I will show you over the house."

He took up the candle and preceded me.

We went upstairs and downstairs, examining both kitchens and attics. The remainder of the rooms were entirely bare of furniture; and the house was a regular formal up-and-down affair, which might have been situated on the Duke of Bedford's Bloombury estate. There were no gloomy corridors—no deep-sunk unexpected cupboards—no possibility of secret doors or passages. It was damp, mouldy, and depressing, but perfectly commonplace.

"No room for a ghost to hide here," said I, jocularly.

"It don't look liko it," observed Mr. Batesford; "but the neighbors are otherwise. Let us return to the parlour, close the shutters, and make ourselves comfortable as we can till twelve o'clock strikes. That is, I believe, the legitimate hour for ghostly visitants."

We took our seats in the comfortable apartment, which felt chilly and miserable enough to depress any professional ghost-hunter. The wind whistled through the creaks of the decaying shutters, threatening every moment to extinguish our feeble candle.

"Let us fortify our spirit with a little supper, Mr. Batesford," I said, diving into my carpet-bag, and producing a cottage loaf, a chicken-and-

ham sausage, and three bottles of Bass's ale. My companion fell to work with alacrity, eating and drinking in an singularly rapid yet noiseless manner. He consumed the lion's share of two bottles of ale, and watched me with wistful eyes as I opened a third. I began to despise him. "Ho drinks," I said to myself, "to obtain a stoek of Dutch courage. So much the better. Had he not swallowed more than his share, I might have been tempted to tipple, whereas now my head is cool. I am prepared for anything."

For one thing I was not prepared—for Mr. Batesford suddenly falling asleep and snoring loudly. I called to him once or twice, when he ceased for a few moments without waking up, but presently began again as had as ever.

I looked at my watch; it was only eleven o'clock. What should I do till twelve? I did not like to smoke. I fancied it would look disrespectful, when you expected a ghost, to be puffing out the vapor of tobacco. I had forgotten to bring a pack of cards, or I might have had a game at Patience. What should I do? Just then my companion emitted a more energetic snore than usual, which caused me to turn towards him. His legs were stretched out, his chair was tilted back, and his head was supported by the edge of the table. For a sparrows' nest man he was a most uncomfortable sleeper. His breathing was perfectly convulsive. But his breast pocket rather than himself engaged my attention, for it protruded that newspaper which I had been so eager to see in the railway carriage. I could no longer restrain my curiosity, but drew it softly forth, and settled myself down to read it by the flickering candle light. I soon became interested in the tiny old newspaper. The England of 1803, just as we were remembering that tremendous struggle which terminated in Waterloo and St. Helena, rose before my eyes. But a paragraph of half-a-dozen lines in the third page put politics completely out of my head.

I felt my blood congeal, and my skin roughen with horror as I read the words. "I rose slowly to my feet. 'Gracious Powers!' I murmured; 'I sneered at the notion of this house being haunted, and here, within a year of me, in yonder chair, sits—' "

I bent cautiously over him. His head was thrown back. I shuddered with affright. I could guess now why he wore a high collar and stock. I could see the fatal—

Just then a distant clock struck twelve. My companion suddenly woke, and said, with a yawn, "What twelve o'clock, and no ghost yet! Come, Mr. Knight, I think you will be able to certify that, barring a few repairs, the house is fit for anybody to live in; and I shall be happy to give you a liberal commission if you can find me a respectable tenant."

While he spoke thus, I was staring at him with a fixed gaze of horror. He did not seem to notice my expression of countenance, but presently observing the newspaper in my hand, exclaimed, in an angry tone, "How dare you sir!" and snatched it from me.

Just then an unusually strong gust of wind penetrated the crazy shutters and blew the candle out. The embers were still red hot, and I contrived to relight it; as I did so, I heard a distinct door bang. I looked round for my companion, but he was gone!

With trembling knees, and a swiftly-palpating heart, I hastily packed my carpet-bag and quitted the house of desolation. After trudging a hundred yards or more along the road, I reached the village inn, and was surprised to observe a stream of light pouring from the chinks of the door at that late hour. I knocked, and was admitted.

"Why, you look most as scared as we do, master," observed the landlord; and we've been watching the corpse light over in the Haunted House yarder. Just as twelve o'clock struck, out went the light, 'zactly as I said it would; didn't I, missus?"

"Aye that ye did, Joe," replied his wife.

"My friends, I can explain something of this," said I. "I belong to a Society up in London, instituted with the view of enquiring into ghost stories; and I came down to visit Marshland Grange for that purpose, in company with the landlord. That accounts for the light you saw."

"Why, there bairn! ne'er a landlord," piped out a village patriarch. "The house has been in Chancery ever since Batesford the forger cut his throat in the front-parlor, sixty years ago."

I returned to London next day in such an excited state that I was scarcely able to attend to my business; but I made a circumstantial report of my adventures to the Supernatural Investigation Society. I added the singular fact that on examining our old ledgers I found the name of Edgar Batesford among our customers during the year 1803, and that his account had been ruled off suddenly with a considerable debt, which was passed to Profit and Loss.

This certainly sounds like a genuine ghostly visitation. But, on the other hand, I am bound to confess that, on unlocking my safe, I found the twenty-pound note to be an unmistakable sham—in fact, it was drawn on the Bank of Ilfracombe. Now, I am positive I locked up a genuine Bank of England note. Supernaturalists will say that

this strengthens their belief in the story; for the substitution of a counterfeit for a genuine note, by some shadowy sleight-of-hand, was the very trick to be expected from the spirit of a forger; but Jack Toombs, our President, who is a hard-headed sceptical fellow, holds another view. He reasons thus:

It is well known that our respected secretary has a younger brother in his office, who is perpetually gibing and jocular at our S-society. This gentleman possesses a duplicate key of the safe. Supposing Batesford's connection with the house of A. W. Knight and Co. in 1803, and his subsequent suicide, what is to prevent him surreptitiously coming over to personate the forger? At the right moment this pretended ghost blows the light out, and slips away by the back door as fatal to the supernatural theory a real spectre would have disappeared silently."

To this I will reply but little. Whichever view you adopt, the matter is surrounded with difficulties; but this I will say, that if Jack Toombs had seen that being as I saw him, with his head thrown back, he would not have been in a condition to theorize so dispassionately. At any rate, I have had enough of it. My nerves are completely shattered; so I purpose resigning my secretaryship, and joining the German Turnverein Gymnastics club, I trust, make me myself again."

Mantoba Schools.

Rev. A. A. Cherrier, P. P., Superintendent of the Catholic schools of Manitoba, writes that there are 5323 children inscribed upon the rolls of this number 868 receive their education from the Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary, 764 from the Grey Nuns, and 26 from the Sisters of the Order of Chanoines Regulars. Thus 1633 children, more than half of all the Catholic children of Manitoba, are educated in religious orders, whose superiority in this matter is generally recognized. Some 768 children receive education from private teachers, among whom are the Mariettes Brothers, who carried off first prize at the Manitoba exhibition for their school exhibit, two graduates of the Manitoba University, Rev. Messrs. Bourret and Noret, and M. Muller, who secured a diploma at the London Colonial Exhibition, as well as four graduates of St. Mary's Academy and Tache Academy. The remaining 900 children are educated by elementary school teachers. Abbe Cherrier states that in 1896, were kept open in 816 districts. The average attendance in these schools was as follows: 5 to 10 in 207 schools; 10 and less than 15 in 207 schools; more than 15 and less than 20 in 170; more than 20 and less than 25 in 77. The average attendance in all these schools was 26 in 716 out of 816 schools. He, therefore, points out that the favor granted in the Laurier-Greenway settlement of a Catholic teacher for schools with an attendance of at least 25 was not what it was claimed to be. He concluded by stating that the attendance in the Catholic schools is the most satisfactory, if the difficulties of the country are taken into consideration, and in fact more satisfactory than in the public schools.

Rev. G. Guillet, O. M. T., cure of St. Mary's, of Winnipeg, states that in his parish in the Academy of the Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary, out of 247 pupils 40 are girls belonging to the best Protestant families of Winnipeg and vicinity, and of seven pupils who underwent examination before the Manitoba University five were successful. This is a better showing than any public school or academy in Manitoba. There are other Catholic schools in the parish, any one of which is equal if not superior to any public school.

A despatch from Bombay says that the Mad Mullah of Huddal commanded the Afridis who have just captured the British fort in the Khyber Pass, which the natives will now keep scaled up.

FIRESIDE FUN.

Parson (to boys fighting): "Oh, you naughty little boys, what are you fighting about? Don't you know it's very sinful?" Board School Boy: "Please, sir, that other boy is a Hangean and I'm a Baptist, and he said my doctrines was all wrong, so I punched his 'ead."

"I wish I knew whether my Robert really loves me or not." "You can easily find out. All you have to do is to make an appointment with some other young fellow, only take care that Robert is informed of what you have done. Then if he really loves you he will certainly kill you, but if he doesn't you may rest assured that he is only flirting with you."

On all watch-house doors it is written: "No admittance except on business." An Irishman was once looking for work, and not seeing what was on the door, walked in. The watchman asked Pat did he see what was written on the door. "No, sir," said Pat. The watchman said: "Well, it says no admittance except on business." "Faith, sure, and I never heard it," replied Pat.

A reader of The Youth's Companion tells of a Parisian beggar who is growing old, and who, finding the cold very trying, decided to give up begging. One day last winter, therefore, when the mercury had taken a sudden drop, he called to an old patron: "Well, I don't care; after next summer I am going to give up the business." "But what about your customers?" asked his patron. "Well, I'm sorry for them," said the old man, "but they'll have to get along the best way they can!"

They were discussing the construction of a new gown. "From a hygienic point of view and merely as a matter of health," suggested the dressmaker, "I think it should be made—"

The haughty beauty stopped her by a gesture. "Hygienic point of view!" she exclaimed. "Matter of health! What has that to do with it? When I want health, I will go to a doctor. When I want style, I come to you. We will now eliminate all absurdities and discuss this purely from a common sense standpoint. Will it be fashionable and becoming?"

Johnny Masher, an eligible young man, making a call at the O'Grady mansion, and Miss Nellie O'Grady was entertaining him. They were discussing the question of flowers. Mr. Masher said: "The flowers that bloom in the spring are all right, but I admire the chrysanthemum more than any other flower." "That's very natural," replied Nellie; "it is so much like you." "In what way is the chrysanthemum like me?" he asked. "It is like you because it comes late and has no scent to speak of, and he never come back any more."

A student in one of the medical colleges is responsible for the statement that at a certain place of public entertainment one of the boys was bragging of his manifold accomplishments until one of the company lost patience and said in a gruff tone: "Now, we've heard enough about what you can do. Come, tell us what there is you can't do, and I'll undertake to do it myself." "Waal," replied the student, with a yawn, "I can't pay my account here. So glad to find you're the man to do it." A d the critic paid the score amid roars of laughter from the party.

The Boston Traveller recounts a funny incident which took place in a superior court in that city in the trial of one Behro. A witness, after telling some of Behro's alleged faults, went on to recount an unpleasant experience he had with the accused a few weeks before the matter got into court. "I called at his office," said the witness, "to try to compel him to return the money he secured from me by false representation. He ordered me from his office, and as I didn't care to be assaulted I concluded to obey him. As I was going out he told me to go to—'" "And in consequence of what he told you to do, what did you do?" inquired Assistant District Attorney Snughrue. "Went straight to police headquarters," replied the witness. It is needless to add that the solemnity of the court was disturbed for the next five minutes.

Father Kehoe's Brother Fatally Shot.

Rev. Father Kehoe of Drayton received the painful information that his brother William had been accidentally shot at Great Falls, Mont. Mr. Kehoe and a friend had driven out with their guns for a little sport and the companion was amusing himself throwing out some blank cartridges when accidentally a sound cartridge was mistaken for a blank one, and as the gun happened to be pointing towards the poor victim the full charge was sent into his body. Mr. Kehoe lived 80 hours after the accident happened. When the remains reached Kincaid, the residence of his parents, great crowds of people assembled to meet the body and convey it to the home of his heartbroken parents.

Rev. Father Kehoe, assisted by Fathers Conoran, of Teeswater, and Waddle, of Chippewa, performed the last sacred rites over the remains of the former's brother, and Father Brohman, of Formosa, delivered a very appropriate address.

PRINTING

Properly executed does more good than printing

THAT

is lifeless and unattractive.

Our work

GATCHES

the eye, and the result is that it is read.....

THE

main feature of our printing is that it appears pleasing to the

EYE

and we claim that such work

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